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Chairman: Ms. Martinson ..... (Sweden)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 108: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/C.3/56/L.12/Rev.1*)

Introduction of draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.12/Rev.1: Policies and programmes involving youth*

1. **Ms. Carvalho** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the sponsors listed in the document and Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Croatia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Guatemala, Lithuania, Nicaragua, Slovenia, South Africa, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine, introduced the draft resolution and said that two changes had been made to the text. In paragraph 10, the words "strategies related to them" should be replaced by "youth empowerment strategies", and at the end of that paragraph, a footnote should be inserted with the text "Document A/C.3/56/2, concerning the fourth session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System".

Agenda item 110: Crime prevention and criminal justice (*continued*)

Introduction of draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.16: United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders

2. **Ms. Ahmed** (Sudan), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, introduced the draft resolution and said that two changes had been made. The first preambular paragraph now read: "Recalling its resolution 55/62 of 4 December 2000 and all other relevant resolutions". At the end of paragraph 10, the words "on the present resolution" had been replaced by "on the implementation of the present resolution". There was also an omission in paragraph 7 of the English text: at the end of the paragraph, the words "fulfilment of its mandate" should be replaced by "fulfilment of its mandated obligations". The footnote on page 1 had not yet been finalized because the report of the Secretary-General had still to be issued.

Agenda item 111: International drug control (*continued*)

Introduction of draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.18: International cooperation against the world drug problem

3. **Ms. Lajous** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the sponsors listed in the document and the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Georgia, Israel, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine, introduced the draft resolution.

4. **The Chairman** said that Benin, Bhutan, Chad, Gambia, Indonesia, Kenya, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Nigeria, the Sudan and Suriname had become sponsors of the draft resolution.

Agenda item 115: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

5. **Mr. Hanjiargyrou** (Cyprus) said that his delegation had aligned itself with the statement presented earlier in the debate by the representative of Belgium on behalf of the European Union. He would therefore limit his remarks to the situation of children in Cyprus.

6. The Republic of Cyprus, since its independence, had adopted and consistently pursued a policy of active promotion and protection of the rights of the child. It had ratified the major international instruments for the protection of children without any reservations. Its Constitution gave the Convention on the Rights of the Child precedence over any domestic law and its provisions had been invoked in court proceedings and had affected their outcome. Cyprus had also been one of the first countries to end corporal punishment.

7. Existing national legislation was extensive and effective. The legislative framework included the children's and young persons' law of 1990, the violence in the family law of 1994, the parents' and children's relations law of 1990 and the adoption law of 1995. Furthermore, the national legal framework was under constant review to ensure that it was in full conformity with the Convention and to bring existing legislation into line with European Union law. In that context, the Government had established a central committee to monitor the implementation of the Convention; in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, the committee was engaged in

increasing public awareness on the rights of the child. In addition, comprehensive child welfare programmes and services had been strengthened and the authorities were pursuing more systematic data collection in the field. The Government's desire to create a better world for all vulnerable groups in society, including children, was reflected in State expenditure for the implementation of social programmes, which had accounted for 33 per cent of total public spending in 1998. Recognizing the importance of joint action for the promotion of social development, the Government was working in partnership with non-governmental organizations and local community councils by providing technical assistance and annual grants for the operation of social programmes and services. In 2000, 38 per cent of State grants had been directed at children's programmes run by the voluntary sector.

8. Although the efforts of Cyprus had been considerable, there was still room for improvement in the situation of children in Cyprus. On the basis of its experience in monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in line with positive international trends concerning children, the Government was currently focusing on improving: coordination of children's policies and programmes at the governmental, non-governmental and private levels; systematic collection of data on children; updating of legislation and administrative procedures ensuring children's participation in decisions concerning them; and public awareness-raising of children's right to participate. Those goals had been incorporated in a National Plan of Action for Children for the period 2000-2004, which had been prepared in close collaboration with all sectors of society involved with children's issues, both governmental and non-governmental.

9. His Government believed that the international community should intensify its efforts to combat child labour. In that respect, it welcomed the adoption and ratification by 100 countries of International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the creation in 1999 of the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC).

10. **Ms. Espinola** (Ecuador) said that her delegation associated itself fully with the position expressed by the representative of Chile on behalf of the Rio Group and reiterated its commitment to the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children. Pursuant to those instruments, and bearing in mind the importance of giving priority to children, her Government had implemented a series of policies designed to protect children's rights and meet their needs.

11. Her Government had increased the share of the social sector budget devoted to services for children from 16 to 20 per cent; expanded the coverage of nutrition programmes for poor students, programmes for street children and disabled children, and nutrition programmes for pregnant women and children under age 2 at risk for malnutrition and anaemia; developed the "Our Children" programme, with support from the Inter-American Development Bank, which had increased the coverage of comprehensive development programmes for children under 6; managed to reduce infant mortality; and expanded immunization coverage. While the Government had made major efforts in that area, the serious economic crisis in Ecuador, added to the external debt burden, had limited the development of the Ecuadorian people. However, in keeping with its national and international commitments to children and youth and its determination to give top priority to their protection, the Government would attempt in the coming year to allocate 25 per cent of its revenues to meeting their basic needs.

12. In the legislative area, the 1998 Constitution established a new social and legal status for boys and girls, designed to give effect to their rights. To that end, the Government was working to ensure the full exercise of the rights of children and youth through new legislation which, in addition to providing comprehensive protection, defined and embodied the content and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Constitution; established mechanisms guaranteeing the rights of children and youth; and defined the State's obligation to formulate policies for the eradication of child labour. The draft of that new Children and Youth Code was currently being considered by the National Congress.

13. In order to hear what Ecuadorian children felt about their situation and needs, the Minister for Social Welfare, in addition to briefing children about the efforts being made on their behalf, had listened carefully to their concerns and answered their questions at an open meeting. The boys and girls of Ecuador were actively involved in the consideration

and identification of proposals for the programme for the coming decade.

14. One subject of concern that was preventing countries from allocating a larger proportion of their budget to the social sphere was external debt payments. A durable solution must be found to that problem. Without essential resources, it would certainly be very difficult to counteract the decline in the quality of life of children and youth. Her Government was aware of its responsibilities and had adopted social and economic policies for the benefit of Ecuador's children.

15. One aspect of the cycle of poverty which was of concern to her Government was the phenomenon of adult migration and resulting child abandonment. That problem was worsening daily, leading to the break-up of families, and required urgent attention. Between 1999 and 2000, the number of Ecuadorian children whose parents had abandoned them had risen from 60,000 to 140,000, a situation which was truly cause for concern and alarm.

16. In conclusion, her delegation expressed its sincere thanks to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), through Ms. Carol Bellamy, the Executive Director, and Ms. Yoriko Yasukawa, the UNICEF Representative in Quito, for the Fund's ongoing cooperation in helping Ecuador improve the living conditions of its children.

17. **Mr. Ferrer** (Cuba) said that his delegation was gratified that the Convention on the Rights of the Child was the international human rights instrument that had received the greatest number of ratifications (191), although it regretted that the goal of universal ratification had not yet been achieved because of a tiny number of States, including the world's most highly developed country. It was also gratified at the large number of States, which included Cuba, that had signed the two Optional Protocols to the Convention, on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, in the year that had elapsed since their adoption by the General Assembly. Cuba was also one of the few States to have ratified the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

18. Eleven years after the World Summit for Children, some progress had been made towards achieving the proposed objectives, but that progress was scant and insufficient. The goals were not unattainable, but lack of solidarity on the part of the majority of developed countries was preventing their achievement. For example, the direct cost of immunizing a child against six preventable diseases was less than the price of a cup of coffee in any developed country. However, according to recent data from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), official development assistance (ODA) as a percentage of gross national product (GNP) averaged only 0.22 per cent, compared with the target of 0.7 per cent.

19. Pursuant to the agreements adopted at the World Summit for Children, Cuba had for several years had a national programme of action which demonstrated that political will played a vital part. All Cuban children and young people had a classroom and a teacher and the rate of enrolment in basic education was practically 100 per cent. Cuba had the highest ratio of teachers per inhabitant (1 for every 42) and was working hard to achieve an average figure of 20 students per classroom by 2002. Some 2,400,000 children and young people, representing 21.4 per cent of a population of just over 11 million, were attending educational institutions at the various levels. At a time when, unfortunately, illiteracy remained to be eradicated throughout the world, the audio-visual programme set in motion in Cuba would soon bring computer training even to preschoolers, put a television in every classroom and provide one video system for every 100 students. A television channel devoted exclusively to education would soon go on the air.

20. Despite the illegal, criminal blockade imposed by the United States Government on the Cuban people for almost 42 years, Cuba had achieved an infant mortality rate of 7 per 1,000 live births and a life expectancy at birth of 76 years. Because Cuban children were immunized against 11 preventable diseases, diphtheria, poliomyelitis, neonatal tetanus, meningitis and tuberculosis had been totally eradicated. However, in most of the world negative structural factors required actions which were beyond the reach of individual governments, and it was vital to create an international order in which all rights and freedoms, as well as the duty of States to promote the enjoyment of the right to development, would be fully effective. His delegation hoped that the General Assembly would be able to hold its special session on children in the near future and with the broadest possible participation and that the

session would make a genuine and effective contribution to improving the situation of all children throughout the world.

21. His delegation viewed with concern the interference of the Security Council, the organ entrusted with preserving international peace and security, in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. The Council was neither altruistic nor effective in that area. Its resolutions and actions in that regard had not substantially improved the situation of children in armed conflict. The place for that issue was the General Assembly, which, together with the Economic and Social Council, was responsible under the Charter of the United Nations for social, humanitarian and human rights matters, regardless of what other competent bodies might do to help minimize the impact of armed conflict on children.

22. **Ms. Khalil** (Egypt) said that she would have liked the Special Representative's report to mention the situation of children under foreign occupation, in particular, children in the occupied Arab territories who were still living in inhumane, unacceptable conditions.

23. The upcoming special session on children was proof that the various countries of the world had the political will to improve the situation and protection of children. The special session would be a turning point, for the entire international community was expected to support efforts to strengthen the rights of the child.

24. Her delegation reaffirmed its support for all child-related activities carried out at the national and international levels. Egypt had been one of the first countries to accede to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to all related instruments. It had also taken part in all the international forums on the subject.

25. At the national level, her Government had prepared a document on the protection of children aimed at providing them with the necessary social services to improve their situation and develop their abilities. One of its political priorities was the question of the protection of children and child labour. Despite the efforts made in that regard, problems remained and everything possible was being done to solve them through the adoption of measures such as prohibiting the employment of children in dangerous work, imposing a minimum working age and limiting the number of hours that children could work. All dimensions of the problem were being considered, taking into account the root causes of the phenomenon, particularly poverty. The goal was to end poverty and strengthen protection for children and families.

26. **Mr. Osmane** (Algeria) said that the cause of the protection and defence of children had progressed over the past decade as could be seen from the Secretary-General's report entitled "We the Children: End-decade review of the follow-up to the World Summit for Children". However, much remained to be done in the area of the protection and promotion of children's rights. Statistics and the situation on the ground showed that the attainment of those goals was lagging far behind the promises of the World Summit for Children. The ambition of creating a world fit for all children was confronted with the reality of the current global situation, namely, the widening gap between rich and poor.

27. The situation of children in Africa was more worrying than anywhere else. Far more so than their parents, African children were victims of the chronic deterioration in terms of trade, the debt burden, rising unemployment, the decline in official development assistance and the paltry levels of external financing and direct investment. That situation was compounded by persistent pandemics, environmental degradation and the existence of numerous hotbeds of tension and armed conflict. All the African countries had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and there was also an African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, but the continent was more than ever in need of support from the international community, particularly in the form of increased official development assistance. His delegation hoped that the upcoming international conference on development assistance would focus seriously on the problem of development cooperation, which in recent years had reached its lowest level ever. Insufficient investment had been largely to blame for the problems in achieving the goals of the World Summit for Children.

28. Algeria, 30 per cent of whose population were under 15 years of age, had done its utmost since independence to promote the protection and physical and cultural development of children, assisted by government agencies, non-governmental organizations and various associations. A plan of action for the promotion and protection of children had been drawn up and a monitoring centre for the rights of mothers and children had been established.

29. Algeria had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments for the promotion and protection of children's rights and had also established legal and legislative mechanisms at the local level, covering the areas of health, social protection, the right to life, literacy and education.

30. Since children were the future of humankind and a world truly fit for children could not be achieved without effective solidarity, the international community had a moral obligation to join forces to achieve the goals of the World Summit for Children and fulfil the commitments made at the Millennium Summit.

31. **Archbishop Martino** (Observer for the Holy See) said that for many people the scenes on television and in the print media of the World Trade Center disaster and the armed response against Afghanistan had had a lasting and profound impact. Fortunately, television would be the closest that a majority of the world's people would ever come to experiencing war and armed conflict, but unfortunately, too many children were actually affected by war and conflict every day of their lives. They bore the physical and psychological scars resulting from direct involvement as combatants or from abduction, abuse, separation from their families, malnutrition and lost educational opportunities.

32. The same could be said of children who were victims of exploitation, for whom unimaginable horrors were an everyday occurrence: they too suffered physical and psychological trauma, which left scars that might never heal.

33. The Convention on the Rights of the Child continued to guide governments in their actions to promote the well-being of children through the recognition of their dignity and the acknowledgement that "the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth".

34. The Holy See had been the fourth State to ratify the Convention. The following day, his delegation would be depositing the instruments of ratification of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention, on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. It was doing so not because that was the next step after signature, but because the Holy See had always recognized the fundamental importance of protecting the human rights of children and promoting their well-being. That was evident from the thousands of schools, hospitals and care centres operating under the auspices of the Catholic Church, as well as from the Church's work among refugee and displaced children, those living in poverty and those separated from their parents or family; it was also reflected in the Church's efforts to protect children from the atrocities of armed conflict and exploitation.

35. His delegation was pleased to note that the number of ratifications required for the entry into force of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had been reached, and hoped that universal ratification of that important instrument would be achieved. Its ratification of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict meant that only three more ratifications were needed for that Protocol to enter into force. In depositing its instruments of ratification, the Holy See encouraged all other States to join in furthering the legal protection of children by ratifying or acceding to the Protocols.

36. As was stated in the Secretary-General's report entitled "We the Children", much progress had been made, but action still needed to be taken to achieve the goals set during and since the World Summit for Children. Each and every action that the United Nations system might take helped to chip away at the problems that continued to hamper the realization of the rights and well-being of children. The role of parents and the family must be strengthened and they must be helped to provide the best for their children.

37. The Holy See had always recognized the human dignity of children, and that in turn had empowered its centuries-old tradition of protecting and caring for them; his delegation affirmed its determination to join with all others who did the same.

38. **Mr. Chuquihuara** (Peru) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made the previous day by the representative of Chile on behalf of the countries members of the Rio Group. One of his Government's main goals was to promote and protect the human rights of the population as a whole. To that end, it was implementing measures in favour of children and youth pursuant to the provisions of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the specific

commitments arising out of the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994, the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995 and their respective review processes at the international level, as well as the corresponding regional agreements reached at Lima, Kingston and Panama City.

39. The situation of children and youth in Peru was critically related to the country's social and economic situation. Poverty and extreme poverty, unequal income distribution and social exclusion were the main factors which had a negative impact on the lives of Peru's children and youth. As a result of those factors, children were forced to enter the labour market early and to live on the streets, lacking the minimum conditions necessary for their growth and development. They were exploited economically and exposed to sexual abuse and exploitation, sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, and early pregnancy, and were often victims of the indiscriminate use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco and of other high-risk situations. That was the reality of life in a developing country and immediate, effective responses were needed which save priority to the best interests of the child. The commitment to Peru's children was linked to the elaboration and implementation of comprehensive social policies which took into account the country's multi-ethnic, multicultural nature and promoted equal opportunities for both girls and boys.

40. He drew attention to the particular needs of girls in Peru, who were at a critical disadvantage because of the discrimination against them, the continuing preference for male children, their lack of a voice or the power to make their own decisions, and the social and biological risks they faced from unprotected sexual relations and abuse. All policies must therefore take into account a cross-cutting gender approach which promoted equity and eradicated all forms of violence and discrimination. The situation of indigenous girls and those living in rural areas was even more critical. The Government was devoting particular attention to them and was working with governments of the region and non-governmental organizations to design programmes in such areas as health and education which would promote their development while preserving their cultural and ethnic values.

41. Under that strategy, education would be one of the keys to improving the situation of poor children and youth, and there was a need to incorporate an approach which was tailored to the life cycle of children and youth and guaranteed universal, equitable access to education from the primary level up to job training. Quality education and respect for the teaching profession were also crucial. Education for boys and girls, particularly rural girls, would be the response of President Toledo's Government to the challenge of combating the problem of high drop-out rates, which left children, particularly girls, on the street, working and exposed to various risks. Another key would be comprehensive health care, to which all Peruvians were entitled and which included the exercise of the right to sexual and reproductive health. Education, information and comprehensive health-care services were essential for responding to the country's social situation, and the Government was working to introduce universal health insurance. Improvements would also continue to be made to schoolchildren's insurance, so that it guaranteed not only the protection of children's health but also their continued school attendance.

42. On 29 and 30 October 2001, the third Ibero-American Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Children and Youth Affairs, bringing together representatives of 21 countries, would meet in Lima in preparation for the eleventh Ibero-American Conference of Heads of State and Government. The meeting was expected to adopt a plan of action, entitled "New challenges for improving the quality of life of Ibero-American children and youth", which contained a set of social goals to be met by the year 2015. The outcome of the meeting would represent a further effort by the region to improve the quality of life of vulnerable population groups, such as children and youth. His country's commitment to children and youth was also reflected in the prompt action envisaged by the Government to attend to their needs.

43. The postponement of the special session of the General Assembly on children provided an opportunity to reflect on the negotiating process that had been reached, for it was essential to preserve what had been achieved in the past in terms of specific commitments, always guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and it was important to emphasize that the best interests of children and youth governed countries' actions in such a way that it was necessary to evolve in order to make further progress in the promotion and protection of their rights.

44. Achieving the agreed goals would require not only a determined, sustained commitment to work on the part of all members of society, but also the participation of children and youth as the intended beneficiaries of the measures to be taken, so that their needs and demands could be identified and met through strategies to reduce poverty and improve their living conditions. The commitment to their well-being must therefore be immediate and unconditional. Only when there was sustained progress in that direction would it be possible to speak of real social progress in all countries.

45. **Ms. Otiti** (Uganda) said that the rights of children received absolute priority in all her Government's programmes. The theme "A First Call for Children" had been translated into action, the main goal of the process being to ensure that children enjoyed their rights. The Uganda National Programme of Action for Children, adopted by the Government in 1992 in fulfilment of its high-level political commitments undertaken at the 1990 World Summit for Children, remained the main avenue by which that pledge was put into practice to address the realities in the country.

46. The theme of the Programme of Action, which was to establish survival, protection and development goals related to children and women and guide social services and programmes, had entered the execution phase. Furthermore, the Programme of Action was reviewed annually to accommodate the changing needs of children. Through decentralization, child-focused planning processes had been extended to the grass-roots level. The policy of universal primary education was being implemented, with emphasis on orphans and children with disabilities. The new primary school curriculum had recently been introduced, and in August 2000 the African Regional Movement for Girls' Education had been launched. The Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy, had attended the launching, reflecting the commitment of UNICEF to the rights of the girl child. The updating and reform of health policy in Uganda had focused on the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, and national immunization days had been organized to supplement routine immunization.

47. The successful repatriation of demobilized child soldiers from Uganda to Ituri Province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had been undertaken through the organization SOS Grands Lacs, with coordination by UNICEF and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). The children had been reunited with the families and reintegrated into their communities, where they now had access to schooling and vocational training.

48. Although progress had been made, there remained several obstacles undermining the noble efforts to ensure that children enjoyed their rights. HIV/AIDS had increased the number of orphans in the world, although the number of new cases had decreased. Resources to help convert the Programme of Action into an independent and self-sustaining process were lacking, and harmful attitudes about the rights of children were still prevalent.

49. The translation of the Programme of Action into local languages had led in several cases to distortion of its true meaning, so that it had been taken as suggesting that children should be free to do whatever they wanted, whenever and wherever they wanted, without adult supervision and guidance. Uganda had therefore taken steps to establish an Agenda for the Future on the basis of lessons learned; the latter indicated that the Programme should be expanded to involve a wider network of stakeholders, including the private sector, to promote international and regional cooperation and wider community participation, to continue the participation of children and to institutionalize data with the aim of achieving ownership of the process by all Ugandans.

50. Of great importance to her Government was the situation of children, especially in the northern and western areas of the country. Thousands of children were victims of atrocities by the so-called "Lord's Resistance Army" in the north and the Allied Democratic Forces in the west. The situation of children in northern Uganda remained precarious, and her Government had worked in close cooperation with UNICEF to free some of those children. As was clearly stated in the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, escape was the only, very risky, recourse for those children, and that did not always prove successful. Those who succeeded left behind thousands whose fate remained unknown and rejoined the outside world with added problems caused by trauma and disfigurement. Her Government renewed its long-standing invitation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children

and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, to visit Uganda and use his good offices to strengthen efforts to free abducted children.

51. Her delegation hoped that, when the special session of the General Assembly on children was held, all States would have rethought their commitments and refocused their efforts to achieve a world in peace, which was essential if children were truly to enjoy their rights.

52. **Ms. Ahmed** (Sudan) said that the situation of children in the modern world reflected the grave problems facing humanity. The current economic problems in some societies were different from those in developing countries, where there was absolute poverty and a lack of basic services, and children were the worst affected sector of society.

53. Like other delegations, her delegation had been unable to study thoroughly the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, having received it very late. She therefore regretted that she could not comment on it clearly. Reports should be produced in a timely manner so that delegations could study them properly.

54. The unanimity on the Convention on the Rights of the Child certainly proved that States were aware of the importance of the issue, but that must be translated into actions. However, despite the measures adopted by most States, international cooperation should play a larger role, especially in helping developing countries to implement the Convention, in particular so that they could adopt positive methods to enable them to overcome obstacles, meet financial obligations entered into at the international level and have other practical means of implementing the Programme of Action and renewing political will at the national and international levels. The problems currently existing could widen the gap between rich and poor, both between and within States, which would prevent poor countries from enjoying the fruits of globalization and would increase marginalization, especially that of the least developed countries. In addition to the debt problem, other problems were proliferating, including malnutrition, pandemic diseases such as malaria and AIDS in Africa, and the spread of armed conflicts.

55. The Sudan had been one of the first States to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had instituted a national programme aimed at achieving the agreed education and health objectives and formulating laws to safeguard the rights of the child. It had established a High Council for Child Protection, one of the most important institutions working to protect children.

56. The Government had tried to bring about stability in the southern part of the country to avoid a situation in which children were forced to seek refuge. The Sudan was concerned about the situation of children in the south and the persistence of rebellion and terrorism, which had involved forced recruitment of children and the use of children in combat as human shields, in flagrant, persistent violation of humanitarian law, international law and the rights of the child. The Sudan called upon the international community to condemn such practices and to exert pressure on the rebel movement to sit down at the negotiating table and to release child soldiers and abducted children, so that they might be reunited with their families and reintegrated into their communities. In that regard, her delegation was in agreement with the statement of the Secretary-General in his report on children and armed conflict (A/56/342) to the effect that pressure must be exerted to help ensure that parties to conflict respected their child protection obligations and commitments as set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols and in international humanitarian law.

57. Her delegation was deeply concerned about the situation of unaccompanied minors and believed that the practice of using children for jobs that were dangerous and harmful to their health must be stopped. Steps should be taken to eradicate poverty through universal education and to help families by giving them the production means and tools that would enable them to make a sustainable living. Furthermore, the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography were very threatening phenomena, and the international community should do all it its power to eradicate them on the basis of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its optional protocols and other relevant international instruments.

58. Her delegation looked forward to the rescheduling of the special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children and was convinced that it would provide a good opportunity for examining the progress made in implementing the original plan of action adopted by States in 1990. Considerable progress had been made in negotiating the outcome document, although there

were some paragraphs on which agreement had not yet been reached. Her delegation would participate in a positive spirit in the negotiating group, of which it was a member, in order to ensure the success of that important session.

59. **Mr. Cha** Young-cheol (Republic of Korea) said that in recent years his Government had made a major shift in its policies on children. It had achieved nearly universal access to primary and secondary education and health care, but was disturbed that the majority of children had expressed dissatisfaction with the school curricula and their estrangement from parents and teachers and concern about peer pressure and violence in school. In order to address the problem, the Government was trying to provide, not just basic education, but higher quality education geared to meet the needs of every child, while instilling in them the values that would shape them into responsible global citizens. In pursuit of that goal, teachers were required to participate in periodic training programmes, and programmes were being developed for children with special needs. In addition, since one of the fundamental rights of children was their right to play in a safe and nurturing environment, beginning in 1997 the Government had been establishing youth centres where children could engage in recreational activities under the supervision of adult counsellors; there were now more than 200 such centres, and the number continued to grow.

60. Although modern children were able to benefit from the technological and material advances taking place in all spheres, by the same token they were exposed to new hazards through the mass media, the Internet and computer games, which transmitted images of violence that could have a lasting impact on their psychosocial development. The new means of communication could also be used to exploit children for such sinister purposes as child pornography or paedophilia. Particularly worrisome was the rise in cybercrime against children as the population of Internet users around the world expanded. His Government had made it a priority to introduce effective measures against violence in the media and had enacted a law to protect minors from sexual exploitation in all its forms. Additionally, many non-governmental organizations had been focusing their attention on monitoring the media for violent content that might be harmful to children. It was to be hoped that the advances reported at the national level would find their counterparts at the international level, and that the United Nations would be able to redouble its efforts to ensure the safety, health and well-being of the world's children.

61. **Ms. Hastaei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the World Summit for Children and the mid-term and end-decade reviews had ushered in a historic era in the area of the rights and well-being of children. Since then children's overall levels of health and education had improved, although results had fallen short of expectations following the Summit. Chronic poverty, child mortality, disparities between rich and poor and between countries, violence against children in situations of armed conflict and foreign occupation, sexual and economic exploitation, and lack of resources and of international assistance were serious problems which must be solved in the coming decade. Fortunately, the growing response of Governments to the recommendations of the Summit clearly showed their strong political will to eliminate those terrible scourges which threatened mankind.

62. Despite the postponement of the special session, there remained a high-level commitment on the part of the international community to continue collective efforts to create a better world for children. Unfortunately, the growing awareness of the plight of war-affected children and the increasing focus on their protection and rehabilitation had not yet ended children's suffering during armed conflicts. In the face of the horrendous atrocities perpetrated against children in various regions of the world, particularly in occupied Palestine, the international community must make a serious effort to bring to justice those who committed war crimes, particularly against women and children, and must give priority to the protection of children, who were civilian targets, especially in territories under foreign occupation. The situation in Afghanistan, where more than two decades of war had all but destroyed children's hope for a better future, was a source of concern and there was a collective obligation to ensure that increased international assistance was allocated to those children, particularly refugee and displaced children.

63. Domestically, her Government discharged its responsibility for the protection and promotion of the rights and well-being of the child by playing a coordinating role in mobilizing the public and private sectors as well as civil society. Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had provided a

means of vigorously pursuing the ideas enshrined in the Convention and her Government undertook periodic studies and evaluations with a view to monitoring progress made and also participated in the reporting process in close collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) office in Tehran. In some areas, especially in health and education, the Islamic Republic of Iran was in fact ahead of the goals set by the World Summit for Children. Nevertheless, more remained to be done to improve the situation of children throughout the country and her Government was fully aware of that challenge. Finally, the Islamic Republic of Iran had accepted the amendment to article 43 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on increasing the membership of the Committee on the Rights of the Child from 10 to 18, with a view to helping that Committee to fulfil its mandate more effectively.

64. **Mr. N'Dry** (Côte d'Ivoire), speaking on behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), said that 10 years after the World Summit for Children the situation of children remained a concern: more than 10 million children died every year from the effects of poverty, malnutrition, armed conflicts and pandemics such as HIV/AIDS and malaria; one million children were exploited sexually; in the developing countries alone, some 250 million children aged 5 to 14 were working either full time or part time; approximately 40 per cent of children who did not attend school lived in sub-Saharan Africa; the disparities between the sexes in the education field were enormous; and female genital mutilation was still widespread in certain regions of the African continent.

65. Those problems were compounded by other difficulties which were specific to the West African subregion, such as trafficking in children, which was a phenomenon caused by networks of agents who recruited children in their home areas and transported them, at times with the unwitting complicity of their parents to other countries where they were exploited in plantations, mines and quarries. It should be stressed that no State in the subregion supported that practice, which was the work of individuals who took advantage of the African tradition of the extended family. The authorities in the countries of origin and destination, recognizing the need to cooperate in order to combat that phenomenon more effectively, had adopted measures which had already borne fruit, such as the detention of a number of traffickers and the repatriation of children who were to be exploited. Some countries of the region had also concluded agreements to combat transboundary trafficking in children and other related initiatives were under review. Furthermore, on 22 to 24 February 2000, in Libreville (Gabon), 21 countries of West and Central Africa had held a regional consultation in which representatives of international and non-governmental organizations had participated. As a result of that meeting, a joint platform for action had been approved which defined strategies to combat the trafficking of children in the region. All those measures were in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which all the States of West Africa were parties, article 11 of which recommended that States should promote the conclusion of bilateral or multilateral agreements to eliminate illicit transfers of children abroad and their illicit confinement. UNICEF, through its regional representatives, and the assistance provided to the subregion by donor countries provided essential support for such efforts.

66. A second problem which had arisen in recent decades was that children had increasingly become victims or even participants in armed conflicts, especially in Africa. According to United Nations estimates, some 300,000 children were active participants in conflicts during which many of them died or were mutilated, removed from their families or subjected to exploitation and sexual abuse. West Africa was in fact the scene of many conflicts, and it was therefore necessary to fully implement the agreements concluded following the Accra West African Conference on War-Affected Children and the first International Conference on War-Affected Children held in Winnipeg, Canada, in September 2000. To that end, a child protection unit had recently been created within ECOWAS, with financial support from the Government of Canada. Greater attention must also be paid to refugee and displaced children and street children and it was to be hoped that the various United Nations agencies with a mandate in those areas would coordinate their activities.

67. On the question of early childhood, he pointed out that the individual development and social contribution of children would help to combat poverty, exclusion, intolerance and discrimination, as the Secretary-General had asserted in his report entitled "We the Children". It was essential to achieve universality of rights to food safety, health care, basic education, justice and equality. The Governments of

West Africa were determined to enrol all children in school and to keep them there until they had received good-quality basic education, which would at the same time help to eliminate such problems as street children. In that regard, he was grateful for the activities carried out by non-governmental organizations in the subregion; greater international assistance continued, however, to be necessary.

68. There was no question that Africa had the political will to ensure the well-being of its children and to realize their most fundamental rights, as attested by the adoption of realistic national plans and ambitious regional programmes such as the African declaration and plan of action adopted at the PanAfrican Summit on Children, held in Cairo in May 2001, the Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other related infectious diseases and, in the economic arena, the New African Initiative. In practical terms, the following instruments should be ratified as promptly as possible: the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; and Convention No. 182 of the International Labour Organization on the worst forms of child labour. In addition, the amendment to article 43, paragraph 2, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which would enlarge the membership of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, should be signed.

69. Although it was incumbent primarily on Governments to achieve child-related objectives, the recommendations formulated could not be implemented without the assistance of the international community, since the matters at issue were related to the reduction of poverty. It was noteworthy that the situation of children in Africa had not always been so dire. The traditional family, although very large, was so closely knit that it was often difficult to identify the various progenitors in the family group in the broadest sense, so that the upbringing of the child was the responsibility of the whole community and not only of the biological family. Rapid urbanization had subverted traditional values and practices, and continuing social and economic crisis and armed conflicts had profoundly altered the structure of the family, exposing children to increasing neglect. It would therefore be necessary to strengthen the role of the family so that it was better able to carry out its responsibilities in that regard. The international community should give priority to assisting the developing countries, especially the African ones, in reducing poverty. ECOWAS once again requested acceleration of the debt relief process, full implementation of the 20/20 initiative, and prompt attainment of the goal of allocating 0.7 per cent of the gross domestic product of developed countries to official development assistance.

70. The countries of West Africa had great hopes for the special session on children, and most of their Heads of State had announced their intention of attending that important gathering. Their delegations had actively participated in the preparatory work for the special session, and hoped for a prompt resumption of negotiations on the final document. The text being formulated already reflected some of their concerns; and the delegations of West Africa would do their utmost to achieve a consensus with other countries on the sections still being negotiated.

71. **Ms. Ward** (New Zealand) said she was confident that the work already done by Governments, UNICEF and non-governmental organizations would contribute to the success of the special session on children, since achieving the objective of creating a better world for children had never been more necessary. The special session would be an excellent opportunity to endorse the role of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the importance of a rights-based approach to meeting the needs of children. It would also make it possible to improve the situation of indigenous children around the world, by offering them equal opportunities to education in their own language and culture. That was an area of particular focus for the Government of New Zealand, which was striving to reduce the inequalities in its own society. It was also important to promote access to reproductive health services and information so that young people could make responsible choices. In that respect, the HIV/AIDS pandemic had starkly underlined the need to empower young people, as the participants of the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS had recognized. Reproductive health services were also an area in which attention must be paid to the particular needs of the girl child. New Zealand had signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and

child pornography, and was actively working at the national level to ratify it. The Second World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, to be held in Japan in December 2001, would focus on that particularly abhorrent aspect of child abuse. New Zealand urged all States to do everything necessary, including enhanced cooperation between countries, to stamp out that kind of exploitation. It had also developed a national plan of action to combat that scourge.

72. All countries must acknowledge the appalling impact of situations of armed conflict on the lives of innocent children. New Zealand called on Governments to resolve their conflicts through political dialogue and to concentrate on building a better world for children. Pending a minor legislative amendment, New Zealand would ratify the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, thereby confirming its commitment to ensure that children were not involved in active combat.

73. In 2001, New Zealand had demonstrated its support for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour when it had ratified ILO Convention No. 182. New Zealand had contributed to the ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour and called upon Governments which had not yet done so to take the relevant steps to prohibit such exploitative child labour practices.

74. Her Government had recently introduced legislation that would provide the Commissioner for Children with greater powers to promote the Convention on the Rights of the Child and monitor compliance at the national level. Her Government had increased its funding for care and protection services for children and young people. It was developing an agenda for children as well as a development strategy for youth. Consistent with the Convention and with the rights of children to have a say in matters that affected them, those programmes were being developed in consultation with children and young people, and children had been given a voice in the governance of their secondary schools.

75. New Zealand took its commitment to the rights of children extremely seriously and hoped that in the future work of the United Nations, and at the special session on children in particular, Member States would be united in promoting the best interests of children.

76. **Mr. Tirado** (Colombia) said that his delegation fully associated itself with the statement by the Rio Group on item 115. It believed that the Convention on the Rights of the Child should be the basis for the review of the commitments undertaken for children, and reiterated its commitment to the fulfilment of the obligations arising from the Convention. To that end, it had endeavoured to implement the provisions of article 44 of the national constitution, according to which the rights of the child took precedence over the rights of others, and were fundamental.

77. Colombia's commitment to children was based on a recognition that they were the ultimate goal of society, as citizens and as architects and subjects of their own development. To that end, Colombia was developing a national system of indicators for children with a view to monitoring each of the rights of the child, which could be measured, programmed and evaluated. The result would be a set of indicators, grouped into factors of benefit to children, and finally condensed into a single indicator which would make it possible to organize the results, bearing in mind the need for efficiency, equity and quality in the implementation of policies at the local and national level.

78. Furthermore, Colombia was making great efforts to remove children from the armed conflict raging in the country, and believed that it was possible to find a negotiated solution to the conflict and concrete solutions to the problem of children affected by that situation. To that end, his Government had raised the age of recruitment to the armed forces to 18 years and demobilized all underage soldiers. Unfortunately, boys and girls, like many other Colombians, were being affected in various ways by the conflict. For that reason, Colombia was trying to find a negotiated solution to the conflict, despite the numerous obstacles. For example, while persevering in the peace talks, it was carrying out initiatives for the rehabilitation and reinsertion of children so as to remove them from armed groups. Those initiatives, carried out mainly through the Colombian family welfare institute, included special social programmes ranging from economic reinsertion and support for families to the establishment of a national and international network in support of displaced youth.

79. His Government had also accorded priority to the removal of landmines and, through the social solidarity network, was implementing a national plan for the

displaced population, with special emphasis on children.

80. In a constructive spirit, and in the belief that the result would be beneficial for everyone, his Government intended to continue to work within the framework of the Rio Group on the basis of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the provisions agreed upon at the various world conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations.

81. **Ms. Jenny** (Switzerland) said that the reports of the Secretary-General entitled "Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child" (A/56/203) and "Children and armed conflict" (A/56/342-S/2001/852) were of great interest to her delegation.

82. Switzerland encouraged all States to ratify and implement the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ILO Convention No. 138, and welcomed the unprecedented number of ratifications of ILO Convention No. 182, namely, 100 States in just over two years. Moreover, Switzerland was pleased to report that it had just submitted to parliament for approval the optional protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Her Government was prepared to make a binding commitment to establish the minimum age of voluntary recruitment at 18 years.

83. Unfortunately, many boys and, particularly, girls continued to be subjected to exploitation, ill-treatment and violence on the part of those who should be protecting them, namely, the police, State institutions, their families and their societies. Switzerland remained committed to the struggle against all forms of violence against children, whether institutional, State or private. The Committee on the Rights of the Child had devoted a day of debate to violence against children in 2000 and another day in 2001. Switzerland continued to support fully the recommendation that the Committee had made to the Secretary-General in 2000 that he should conduct a study on the issue of violence against children.

84. Switzerland stressed the intolerable nature of acts of torture, which were prohibited under public international law. The rights of children accused or found guilty of committing crimes must be respected, and they must be accorded treatment that conformed with the international norms on justice for minors. Switzerland called upon all States which had not yet done so to abolish the death penalty for persons under the age of 18 at the time of the commission of the crime for which they were being tried.

85. Switzerland was participating in the efforts of the international community to combat the sexual abuse and exploitation of children. At the domestic level, it was continuing to strengthen the protection of children, in particular by making improvements in its legislation. It was also preparing for the Second World Conference against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, to be held in Yokohama in December 2001, in the hope that the total rejection of such acts would be reaffirmed and international cooperation in that sphere would be strengthened.

86. With regard to combating child recruitment, Switzerland was aware of the importance of achieving the objective of establishing 18 as the minimum age for recruitment and would continue its efforts with a view to ratifying without reservations the optional protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

87. Switzerland reiterated the importance it attached to the special session on children and remained committed to ensuring that the draft conclusions entitled "A world fit for children" was a substantive document expressing the commitment of the international community to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child and mobilizing both Governments and international organizations and civil society in all its diversity, including interested parties from the private sector and business circles.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.